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AUTHOR Turner, Samantha
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ABSTRACT

A research report on the attitudes of students, parents, and staff of an Ontario school for the arts (grades 4-8) is divided into five sections. The first section details the school's establishment, goals, admissions procedure, core program, faculty, and facilities. The second section describes the evaluation procedure. Areas evaluated were student self-concept; patterns of student selection; and graduating students', parents', and staff's perceptions of the school program. Evaluation methods included questionnaires, interviews, and standardized tests. Research findings are discussed in the third section. Graduating students' perceptions of a successful student, why they chose to attend the school, what sacrifices they felt they had made to attend the school, the effect of attendance on their outside friendships, their self-concept, and their perceptions of change in themselves are analyzed. Also discussed are staff perceptions of the student body, parents' views of the school's effects on their children, perceptions of the overall educational experience offered at the school, and staff experience. A fourth section describes administrators' perceptions of the school. The final section contains the researcher's comments on the project. Appendices include evaluation questionnaires, interview schedules, and student self-concept and standardized test results. (LP)

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CLAUDE WATSON SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS
SPRING GARDEN CAMPUS

Patricia Crawford

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

June, 1984



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INTRODUCTION

On 7 May 1979, the Board of Education for the City of North York approved the following recommendation:

"That the North York Board of Education endorse the concept of providing segregated programs for gifted and talented students."

On 27 February 1980, the Board approved the establishment of a City School for the Arts with five implementation phases, beginning in September, 1980 with Saturday programs as Phase I.

On 14 November 1980, Phase II began with the Board's recommendation that the School for the Arts be housed at Spring Garden Public School effective September, 1981 with grades 4 to 6. Phase III extended the program to grade 7 and in September, 1983 Phase IV extended it to grade 8.

The school was officially named Claude Watson School for the Arts, Spring Garden Campus, and began operation in September, 1981.

The goals for the school are:

- to offer a comprehensive academic program with opportunities for enriched program offerings in dance, drama, music and visual arts
- to develop the creative potential of artistically talented students by enriching and accelerating aesthetic development, stimulating creativity and original thinking, nurturing the visual, aural and kinetic senses and by creating an enduring respect and passion for the arts.

Description of the School

Admission Requirements

The Claude Watson School for the Arts in the City of North York draws students mainly from Metropolitan Toronto. Students are accepted on a transfer basis from the other jurisdictions within the Metropolitan area i.e: The City of Toronto, Scarborough, York, Etobicoke and East York. Students from areas outside Metropolitan Toronto are eligible for admission on a fee paying basis.

All students are required to audition and those students not in attendance at a North York school are required to pay a small fee for the audition process.

Screening (Audition) Process

Students may be recommended by their present school for an audition at Claude Watson and/or parents may contact the school directly. No student wishing to audition is denied an opportunity and some do audition a second and third time.

To assist in the identification of individual student's talent areas, a checklist is sent to parents and to the student's teacher if the school has made the recommendation. The checklist from both the school and parent are used as background information to aid in the understanding of the student and as a basis for asking questions of the student during their interview at the audition.

Auditions in the arts areas of drama, dance, music and visual arts are compulsory. While auditions are held in groups, students may also request a solo audition in any or all of the arts areas.

The audition sessions vary depending upon the grade at which a student wishes to enter the school. For students auditioning for entry at the Grade 4 level, participation in a series of eight sessions on Saturday afternoons is required. Those auditioning for entry at Grades 5, 6, 7 and 8 are required to participate in a one-day session.

Claude Watson has a total enrolment of three-hundred students with sixty in each of Grades 4-8. Sixty places are available each year at the beginning level - Grade 4, while places for the Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 years are dependent upon the number of students who have left the program, either through choice or demission. Generally, vacancies for the 5, 6, 7 and 8 levels are quite few in number.

Diversification of audition staff is a prime concern of the principal who wants to ensure that the criteria for admission do not become stereotypic. For that reason, the audition staff changes each year and is drawn from two groups; teachers from elementary, junior high and secondary panels with expertise in the arts and professionals from the arts world. Representatives from the Claude Watson staff are also used as audition staff members.

Audition activities are designed to be fun for the students as well as useful in determining talent. Students are required to participate in two activities in each of the arts areas of drama, dance, music and visual arts. Two staff members in each area share the roles of observer and teacher with the observer rating the student on his/her talent; therefore, for each arts area the student would have two ratings. Ratings are on a nine point scale with the highest rating being a one. All ratings are recorded and then averaged to determine an overall score. On this basis, as well as through an extensive discussion between audition staff members, a consensus is formed regarding the most appropriate students.

Parents of students are notified by mail and are required to meet with the school principal to confirm placement. At this time, school policy, the student's talents and educational needs are discussed. The school considers certain policies to be crucial to the success of the program and ensures parents are willing to give their support to them.

The Program

The Spring Garden campus of the Claude Watson School for the Arts for Grades 4-8 offers a comprehensive academic program with opportunities for an enriched program in the arts. This balanced program is accommodated through an extended school day - six hours instead of five. All programming follows the Ministry of Education requirements and North York Curriculum Guidelines.

In the **academic core program**, the school provides instruction in mathematics, language, social and environmental studies, French and physical education. Academic enrichment and/or remediation opportunities are provided to various students at all grade levels when such needs are identified by the staff. Honour Roll examinations for the purpose of encouraging academic excellence are set by the principal and are available to any student who wishes to sit for them.

The **arts program** comprised of dance, drama, music and visual arts allows for four hours in each of the arts in a four day cycle. Depending upon the grade, students are involved in classes of drama - theatre arts and mime; dance - national dance, creative modern, jazz; music - vocal, band or strings, keyboard and Orff; visual arts - fabric/fibre, painting, drawing, printmaking and sculpture. On the fifth day of the cycle, students choose an arts major from the four arts areas. Along with time spent in their arts choice, this day is also used for practice of music groups such as strings, band and choral. Additional instruction in piano and ballet is also available to students on a fee basis. If students are receiving instruction in piano outside the school, they do not receive instruction in the school in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and/or problems related to different methodologies.

Students are involved in many performances during the year, ranging from choral singing at other schools to full school productions presented in the evening at the auditorium at the Earl Haig campus.

While most activities both academic and arts are accomplished during the regular school day hours of 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., it is necessary on some occasions to have students arrive earlier and stay later for rehearsals, practices and individual attention.

Transportation to and from the school is the responsibility of the student. Since the campus is centrally located to both subway and bus, most students travel by public transit.

Teaching Staff, Resource Staff, Administration

The staff of Claude Watson consists of 23 personnel involved in direct teaching whether it be academics and/or arts, an artistic director, a principal, two support personnel, three secretarial and three caretaking staff.

The principal has been with the school since its inception in 1981 and was instrumental in the development and implementation of a school for the talented. The artistic director, an accredited teacher, has also been with the school since its beginning.

The teaching staff is drawn from the North York Board of Education and consists of fifteen accredited teachers. Seven of these staff members teach academics solely, one teaches arts only, and the remaining seven have a shared responsibility between academics and the arts.

Eight professional arts staff are employed on an hourly basis to provide arts instruction in music, dance and drama.

Facilities

The Claude Watson School for the Arts from Grades 4-8 is known as the Spring Garden Campus and occupies a former elementary school with the addition of four portable classrooms. Some classrooms have been converted into dance, drama, music and visual arts studios.

The school is in close proximity to Earl Haig Secondary School which houses the Grade 9-13 Claude Watson program. Facilities and materials in this school which are shared by staff and students at the Spring Garden Campus include the theatre arts auditorium, visual arts studio, photography studio and musical instruments.

The Study

Purpose of Study

The Claude Watson School for the Arts is unique in North America offering a combined academic & arts program for elementary students and has completed its Phase IV implementation plan to include grades 4-8. In June, 1984, the school will graduate the first group of grade 8 students, approximately 60. The principal requested Educational Research & Evaluation Services to assist in a longitudinal study of the school beginning with this year's grade 8 graduates. The issues examined were:

- . student, parent and staff perceptions of and satisfaction with the program/school
- . the self-concept of students and its relationship to academic achievement and/or success in the arts
- . patterns which may assist in identifying at the screening level, those students who will meet with success at Claude Watson

The Study Procedures

Information was collected by means of questionnaires for students and parents; personal interviews with staff and students; telephone interviews with parents of former students; analysis of self-concept testing, standardized achievement testing and arts ratings completed annually on each student; personal interviews with the secretarial and custodial staff; personal interviews with resource staff.

The questionnaires and interview schedules were developed by the Research staff in consultation with the principal.

Students

Both questionnaires and group interviews were used as a means of gathering information from students. Although in some instances the students were asked to elaborate on their written responses, the interview also served the purpose of asking questions which were not deemed appropriate for a questionnaire.

Questionnaires for students included questions on their reasons for auditioning, the screening process, sacrifices they made by attending Claude Watson, friendships, changes in themselves, program satisfaction in both arts and academics, plans for the future, awards and achievements and highlights of their attendance at the school. (Appendix A) Students were also asked to name the three most successful grade 8 students in the four arts areas as well as academics. The interview schedule focused on an elaboration of their reasons for auditioning, expectations, satisfaction with academic and arts programs and characteristics of successful students. (Appendix B)

In early February, the grade 8 students were administered the North York Self-Concept Inventory by the Research Consultant in their class groups in the absence of the classroom teacher. At this time, the students were given an explanation of the study and given an opportunity to ask questions. Approximately one week later, the questionnaire was administered under the same conditions.

Interviews took place two weeks later with the same Consultant conducting the interviews and an assistant taking notes. Interviews in groups of six and randomly organized from the two classes, lasted about 45 minutes and were conducted in the learning resource centre ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Fifty-eight students were involved in all facets of the data collection.

Standardized achievement scores and previous years self-concept inventories were provided by the school for analysis and inclusion in this report.

Staff

Individual interviews, in a private setting and lasting approximately 45 minutes, were conducted with sixteen teachers, six professional arts staff, the principal and artistic director and one resource staff (Speech and Language Teacher). These interviews focused (where appropriate) on the reasons for their application to teach at the school, their expectations, the unique qualities of staff and students, the screening process, the success of the school and teaching satisfaction. Opportunities for additional comments were provided by a comment sheet given at the end of the interview. (Appendix C)

The secretarial and caretaking staff were interviewed in two groups with questions related to job satisfaction, the unique qualities of the school and suggestions.

Parents

The questionnaire for parents focused on the effect attendance at Claude Watson has had on their child's attitude towards education and friendships. The questionnaire consisted of ten closed items in which parents were asked to indicate the extent of agreement with statements regarding the program. These items were followed by open-ended items linked to questions asked of the students. Parents were asked (as were students) if their children were or were not attending the secondary school arts program at the Earl Haig Campus in September, 1985, and their reasons for this decision. (Appendix D)

All questionnaires were distributed by mail and included a stamped self-addressed envelope to be returned to Research & Evaluation Services. Reminder letters were sent two weeks later along with a mention in a newsletter by the principal. Forty-one (67%) questionnaires were returned.

Telephone interviews with twenty parents of former students were conducted by Research staff. The parents were selected randomly from the thirty-five students who have left the program. The interviews focused on the reasons their child left the school, their perceptions regarding the appropriateness of their child's attendance at Claude Watson and their satisfaction with their child's present school placement. (Appendix E) The perceptions of these parents can be found in Appendix F.

THE FINDINGS

The findings are presented in the following sections:

- . Focus on the Student
- . Focus on the Staff

Within the section Focus on the Student, the data are presented under the headings of the Affective Experience and the Educational Experience. During both the collection and analysis of data, it became apparent that all groups, students, staff and parents had perceived an impact for students in both areas.

FOCUS ON THE STUDENTS

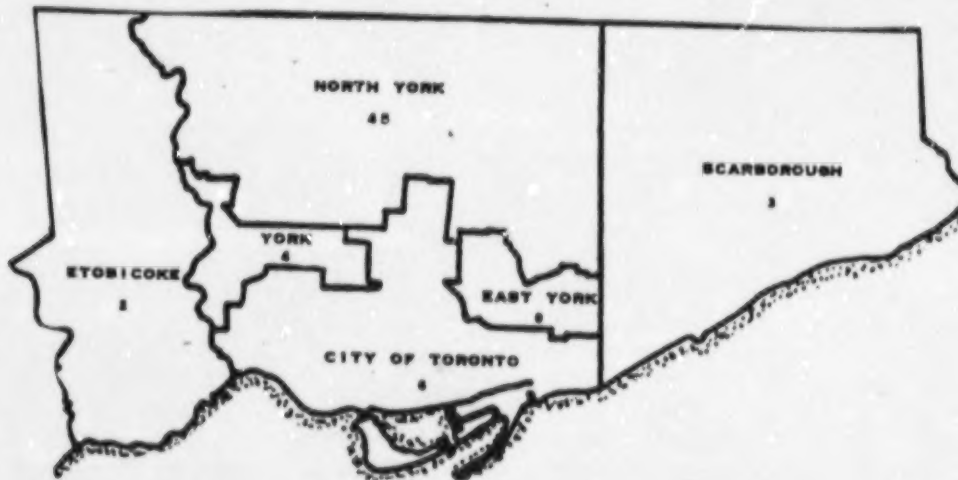
THE AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE - STUDENTS' VIEW

While there was obvious overlap between the Affective and Educational experience, for the purposes of this report the Affective Experience includes:

- profile of students
- characteristics of students
- why Claude Watson?
- sacrifices students have made by attending Claude Watson
- the effect on friendships
- changes in students
- highlights of the Claude Watson experience

Profile of Students

The sixty Grade 8 students at Claude Watson come from every jurisdiction but one in Metropolitan Toronto.



Activities Related to the Arts

The typical student has a wide range of interests and talents as indicated by their participation in arts related lessons and groups. These interests were apparent before their arrival at Claude Watson and have, for the most part, been sustained since their arrival. Lessons in the arts - piano, dance, drama, music and visual arts were accompanied by participation in drama groups specifically the Canadian Childrens' Theatre and Leah Poslun's Theatre.

The following chart indicates the number of outside activities related to the arts listed by students before and after coming to Claude Watson with some students indicating involvement in more than one activity.

Outside Activities	Before Coming to Claude Watson (N = 58)*	After Coming to Claude Watson (N = 58)*
Piano Lessons	19	19
Dance Lessons	17	10
Drama Lessons	5	1
Music Lessons	4	Violin 5 Flute 1 Bass 1 Vocal 3
Drama Groups	4	6
Visual Arts Lessons	1	1
None	8	9

* Some students may have indicated one or more activities therefore the total does not equal the number of students.

Although the number of outside activities have decreased only slightly since their enrolment, the changes in the distribution show that since coming to the school fewer students are involved in dance and drama lessons outside the school, perhaps indicating that the school is now fulfilling these needs of students.

Awards

In addition to varying arts interests and activities, students also showed diversified talent in the awards they have received. Once again, the number of awards/achievements has decreased since the students' arrival at the school, particularly in the area of sports and athletics. In all likelihood, this decrease is due to constraints on students' time which was identified as a sacrifice made since coming to Claude Watson and is fully discussed in that section.

A notable increase in awards in dance is due to the provision of National Dance Examinations at the school as part of the dance program.

Awards	Before Arrival (N=58)	After Arrival (N=58)
Sports	18	7
Athletics	10	5
Academic Achievements	9	2
Piano Festival	7	8
Piano Exams	6	5
Dance	4	19
None	16	12

Students' Perceptions of the Successful Student

One might assume that students would view interest in the arts as well as talent as a characteristic of successful students at the school. On the contrary, only three comments indicated that this characteristic was typical of successful students.

Students' views in regard to the characteristics of a successful student fell under two broad headings, positive work attitudes and good interpersonal skills.

<u>Positive Work Habits</u>	<u>Good Interpersonal Skills</u>
- prepared to work (11) - desire to do better (4) - responsible (3) - disciplined (2) - determined (2) - conscientious (1) - dedicated (1) - organized (1) - set goals (1) - desire to be here (1)	- interest in learning from others (5) - ability to work with others (3) - able to communicate (3) - accepting of other's talents (3) - able to listen (2) - ability to deal with people (1) - patience with peers (1) - ability to find something good in a person (1) - good relationship with teachers (1)

Why Claude Watson?

Many students gave more than one reason which contributed to their decision to audition for Claude Watson. The most commonly cited reasons were:

- the desire to go to a special/different school that would be fun and exciting (18)
- the recommendation of their home school (15)
- the student's interest in the arts (14)

Other comments included an interest in trying new things and the urge to explore and develop their talent:

"I wanted to get more into drama."

"I was interested in the arts particularly dance and drama and wished to further my education in them."

Finally, students spoke of the encouragement of their parents:

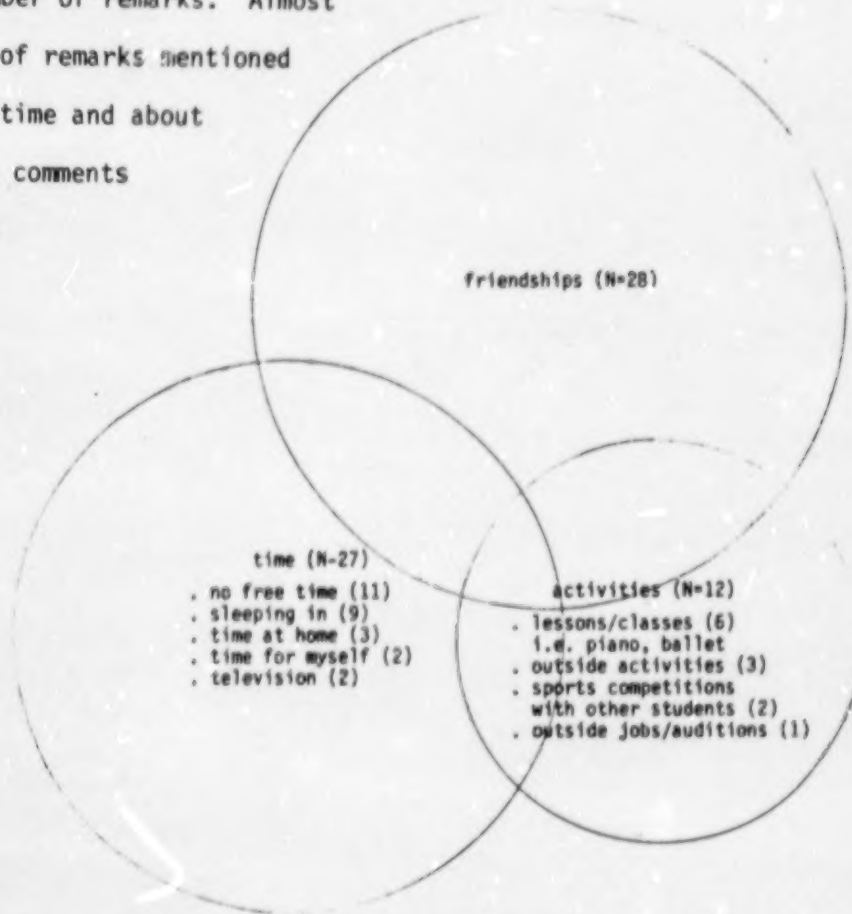
"My parents thought the audition would be a good experience."

"My parents made me realize that this was my chance to excel in the arts."

Sacrifices Students Made by Attending Claude Watson

As stated previously attendance at Claude Watson requires a significant commitment from students. They are often required to travel long distances as well as to be involved in before and after school activities related to the arts. In an effort to understand ways in which this commitment has affected their lives, students were asked to discuss what sacrifices they have made since their arrival at the school. Their comments fell into three categories related to friendships, time and specific activities. These categories are inter-dependent i.e. students who mentioned not seeing their old friends as frequently may have been influenced by time constraints. Similarly, the lack of opportunity to take part in specific activities, such as sports, may again have been influenced by a lack of time. Friends may have been part of those outside activities consequently contact with them would also have been affected.

Comments by students pertaining to the forfeiting of friendships accounted for half the number of remarks. Almost the same number of remarks mentioned a constraint on time and about one-fifth of the comments pertained to the relinquishing of involvement in activities.



Effect on Friendships

Since the students had highlighted friendships as being a significant area in which sacrifices had been made, their responses to a question regarding the effect their attendance at Claude Watson had had on those friendships contributed to a clearer understanding of this issue.

Comments focused on two issues: the friendships outside the school environment and the friendships made at Claude Watson since their arrival and the characteristics of those friendships.

When reflecting on friendships outside the school environment, half of the students' comments related to the loss of friends due to lack of contact, lack of time, changing interests and former friends and classmates' jealousy of their attendance at the school:

"I gave up a lot of friendships from my old school. We used to walk home together and then play hockey outside. Now, I'm too tired and I come home too late."

"When I see my old friends they talk to me but I don't see them that often. Sometimes it's frustrating to see that we're not the same as before."

"I don't keep in touch with anybody from my old school because we have nothing in common anymore."

"I gave up my old friends but that sore has healed."

"My old friends are non-existent really, they think it's a school for snobs and tease me about coming here."

On a much more positive vein, the friendships and characteristics of friendships made at Claude Watson pointed to shared common interests, a closeness, a family-like feeling and support from their classmates. Many expressed the feeling that the friendships made at Claude Watson were special and would last a long time. A few even mentioned that it was the first time they had made any close friends whatsoever.



"The people here want to be here and we share a lot of the same interests, therefore, it was easy to become friends."

"The bond between students is strong, everyone is everyone's friend."

"I have made many close friends here and they always have helped me through my hardships."

"I used to be shy, now I'm more open to others and have made more friends."

Eight students stated that their friendships had not been affected, that they still had the same friends outside the school and had also made friends at Claude Watson.

Students' Perceptions of Changes in Themselves

Almost all students commented on changes of a social and personal nature since coming to Claude Watson. Work attitudes and increased knowledge regarding the arts were also mentioned.

Of the eighty-three comments recorded by students, forty-five related to maturity, responsibility, independence and the ability to express themselves. These personal changes were consistent with the characteristics of successful students reported previously. Social changes (twenty comments) identified by students were popularity due to learning how to make and value friendships and a better understanding and liking of people.

"I've become more mature and value my friendships more."

"I've developed an understanding of people and established very good relationships with people."

"I think I've become a lot more thoughtful by coming here."

"I've learned how to cope with different people and their many attitudes."

"I've become more mature. I realized my priorities and am now more independent and confident."

"I think I am more responsible. I also gained a sense of reality because I know I have to work for what I want."

"I'm not as shy and I've learned to express my feelings. I'm not afraid to take chances or make mistakes."

"I have my own opinions and I'm not afraid to express them."

"Because I travel alone and go a long way everyday, I've become more independent. Before, I always had plenty of free time in class because work was small and in that time I'd talk and goof around. Here, you have no time to; so as a result I've become more serious."

While comments regarding changes in work attitudes were not as prevalent (15), they too reiterated the characteristics of the successful student.

- getting better marks (6)
- concerned about school work (3)
- more organized (3)
- working harder (2)
- thinking more logically and indepth (1)

Students' Self-Concept

The students were administered the North York Self-Concept Inventory in their Grade 6 year (October, 1981) and again this year in February, 1984. On both occasions, the students' mean score was above that of the expected mean for North York students. (Appendix G)

Highlights of the Claude Watson Experience

The opportunity for students to comment on the highlights of their years at Claude Watson brought a very definite consensus of opinion. For most students, involvement in the arts has been the most significant part of their school experience. Highlights for many students also included opportunities to see guest artists and involvement in the dance, music, visual arts and drama program.



Overwhelmingly, most students commented on their participation in performances such as "Reflections", "I am", and outings to perform for schools, groups and festivals.



A residential experience in Outdoor Education is provided for students in grades 6 and 8 at the Outdoor Education Centre at Dorset. Many students found their trip a rewarding experience with respect to the opportunity it afforded them to get to know their fellow students and make new friends. A few students also highlighted their achievement on the Honour Roll and other subjects.

Some of the students comments:



"The trips to Dorset where I could find out what my friends were really like."

"Finally making it to the "Honour Roll" and getting an excellent on an English essay."



"I think the best thing for me that I really enjoyed was having music, strings and vocal."

"Working on something good in drama and never wanting to leave that class."

"I love it when we get up on stage and perform. I get butterflies in my stomach but I love it! It tells me, this is what I am and this is what I can do."

Twelve comments related to the students' increased knowledge of and respect for the arts.

"I've developed my voice, learned much academically and in art, music and dance."

"I am much better in the arts areas. In music, I can sight-read and I now know a lot more about ballet and visual arts."

THE STUDENTS AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE - STAFF'S VIEW

Uniqueness of Students

When asked the ways in which students at Claude Watson are unique, the staff associated a wide range of positive attributes to the characteristics of students. One could say that the students at Claude Watson are "every teacher's dream".



- . mature
- . sensitive
- . wonderful
- . delightful
- . capable
- . co-operative
- . outgoing
- . interested
- . dedicated
- . enthusiastic

Many staff focused on the students self-motivation and their desire to learn. Students were described as not only interested and dedicated to their work but sensitive, kind and supporting of each other.

"Students are self-motivated so it's easy to challenge them."

"There are few discipline problems."

"When exposed to other children's efforts, they become inspired and are more dedicated themselves."

"A strong bond exists between them - they hug each other and are truly pleased when someone does well."

"A caring feeling is developed throughout the school."

Whether or not these students come to the school with these characteristics is difficult to determine. Certainly the staff shared with the students a similar view of a successful student and felt that a desire to remain at the school contributes to their willingness to put in extra time and effort both in the academics and in the arts.



THE STUDENTS AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCE - PARENTS' VIEW

The affective experience for students as perceived by the parents was illustrated in their responses regarding changes in their child's behaviour and attitudes toward school and education and the ways in which their child's friendships have been affected by attendance at Claude Watson.

Behaviour and Attitude Changes Within Their Children

Most of the comments from parents expressed both general improved attitude as well as positive observable behaviour changes in their children.

- looks forward to school (15)
- has an improved attitude toward education (6)
- does not like to miss school even for illness (3)

Some parents expressed it best in their own words:

"Since attending Claude Watson, my child displays a very positive attitude toward school and education. Now only the very best effort is acceptable to my child. School and education have become a very enjoyable experience."

"Went from hating school to looking forward to being there since joining Claude Watson."

"Because of the unique program combination of arts and academic work, my child now has a positive attitude towards school and does not want to miss a day."

"Loves going to school now."



Over half the parents indicated additional personal changes within their children which parents attributed directly to increased school success. For example:

- improved confidence (6)
- gains in task commitment, organizational skills, study habits (4)
- more responsible (3)
- expanded curiosity and efforts (3)
- more positive (2)
- enthusiastic (2)

Other responses by parents related personal growth to their child's "better understanding of self", "appreciation of their own creativity" and "respect for others".

Five parents indicated their children did not like school, were overburdened or were concerned with the lack of academic preparation for secondary school, specifically in science and related areas.

Effect on Their Children's Friendships

Almost one-third of the parents (12) chose not to respond or reported no effect on friendships. Responding parents focused, as did their children, on friendships outside the school and within Claude Watson.

All parents highlighted the positive effects of broadened friendships and the opportunity to choose friends who share the same interests.

"It has enabled my child to develop friendships with peers with like interests and similar talents."

"Has developed many new friendships with children of varying interests and backgrounds."

Some parents attributed this positive effect to the curriculum of the school;

"Because of the co-operative and participatory nature of the Arts Program, our daughter has developed stronger ties with her present schoolmates than she has ever done before."

while others attributed it to the characteristics of the students themselves.

"She finds her classmates supportive, the children at CWS have respect for the varied backgrounds and talents of their friends."

Poignant observations shared by some parents indicate the value both they and their children attribute to the experience at Claude Watson.

"Before attending C.W. my son had no close friends. This was a matter of great concern. He now seems quite popular and has found several friends who share his interests."

"We live in a very transient area so the friendships made at Claude Watson are very real. My child had never really had a constant friend before now."

"My child has overcome his shyness and has learned to become more open."

Comments related to the effects on friendships outside the school were very similar to the students remarks citing lack of time for old friends, loss of contact, and dissimilar interests compared to neighborhood children.

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE - STUDENTS' VIEW

The Educational Experience includes:

- the screening process
- the arts and academic programs
- future plans

Screening Process

Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the auditions for admission to Claude Watson.

Fifty-six students expressed satisfaction with the procedures and reflected that the auditions gave them a chance to try everything while being sufficiently thorough and hard enough for the audition staff to make choices. It gave them a good idea of what the school was about and it was a well-organized, fair and pleasant experience.

Some comments centered on students personal feelings while taking part in the auditions:

- they made me feel at home and comfortable (5)
- it was lots of fun (4)
- it was a little nerve wracking (2)
- the kids were kind and helpful
and it was easy to understand (2)

The Arts Program

The positive comments regarding the arts program, shared by students during the interview, centred around both the satisfaction with the educational opportunities afforded in the program and the enhancement of their personal relationships with other students and teachers.



Educationally, students highlighted the quality of the arts programming as well as the excellence of teaching. All interview groups discussed the opportunities to learn more about the arts even in the areas they did not consider to be their specialty; the climate of classes which encourages them to be creative; and the welcome change from straight academics throughout the day. Teachers were described as friendly, helpful, caring and involved with the individual student. Excellent teaching methods and clear expectations contributed to a high level of arts teaching.

The arts program as viewed by the students affords the opportunities to:

- . get to work with people
- . learn from others who have more talent
- . receive help from others
- . learn about oneself - learn to open up
- . develop a sense of self-worth through performance
- . work with people who have the same interests

Students' Views on Specific Arts Areas

The success with which the school develops students' technical skill, the amount of work expected of students and the ways in which students are encouraged to express their own ideas and feelings in the arts program were all topics which required students to respond specifically under the subject areas of dance, drama, visual arts and music.

Schools Success at Developing Technical Skill: Most students were of the opinion that the school had been successful in developing the technical skill of their talents. Only two students in all arts areas rated the school as not at all successful.

Technical Skill	Very Successful				Not at all Successful
Music	25	22	8	3	
Visual Arts	18	24	11	4	
Dance	12	22	15	7	2
Drama	11	17	25	5	

Workload: A similar pattern of consensus was also found in students' views regarding the amount of work expected of them in the arts. The majority of students expressed comfort with the workload in the four arts areas; Visual Arts - 90%, Dance - 81%, Drama - 81% and Music - 74%.

When asked for comments in regard to workload, over half the students chose to make no comment. Of the remaining group, concern was expressed by ten students regarding the amount of work expected accompanied by the difficulty in balancing requirements in all the areas both academic and arts.

"When all teachers want something at the same time, it's hard to handle."

"Sometimes teachers don't understand the strain of the arts."

Freedom of Expression: All arts areas were discussed by students with regard to this topic.

Drama: Students perceive that they have received significant encouragement to express their own ideas and feelings in drama.

Their comments suggested a climate in which they are free to be open, talk and express their ideas.



"The teacher works with you as an individual and sometimes leaves the room for our own decision making."

"I am told not to be afraid of making a mistake."

"Fellow students compliment you on a good idea, we help each other, my classmates encourage me."

According to the students, the drama curriculum provides for varied and wide ranging use of methods with attempts at integration with other subject areas.

"We are encouraged to contribute our own ideas through monologues, skits improvisations, developing characters and writing scenes."

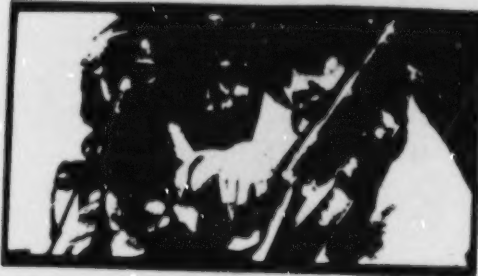
"We do a lot of group work and evaluate each other's work."

"I've learned to draw from past experiences and emotions to express my feelings."

"The drama teacher tries to relate my major to drama by encouraging me to feel the same motives."

Nine students chose to make no comment, while five stated without elaboration that they received little or no encouragement.

Music: Thirty-one students expressed their perception of the encouragement in music in different ways. Most spoke of the increased knowledge and skill they have acquired enabling them to express themselves in ways not possible before.



"by learning to read and interpret music"

"listening and correcting mistakes"

"by practising our instruments"

Students commented on the options of being in performing groups, the recitals, and participation in choir. As one student put it "the teachers really helped me, I had no background in music" and for two students "I never knew I had that voice in me."

While 17 students chose to make no comment, the perceptions of the remaining students were individual, varied and of a highly personal nature.

Ten students indicated they had no chance to express their feelings or ideas with two comments relating to lack of flexibility for differing abilities and styles and monotonous repetition of program.

Visual Arts: As in drama, students identified the classroom climate as influenced by the teacher and curriculum opportunities as the two ways in which freedom of expression are encouraged in the area of visual arts. Eight students chose to make no comment, similarly, eight students felt they had not received encouragement.

<u>Curriculum Opportunities (N=21)</u>	<u>Classroom Climate (N=11)</u>
"lots of opportunities to do our own ideas"	"individualism in work encouraged and accepted"
"we draw what we feel"	"teacher encourages me to express my own ideas"
"by having many exercises in painting and sketches that reflect our own personalities"	"encouraged to experiment/use free movements"
"abstract lets you let feelings out"	
"through being taught new methods to make my ideas permanent on paper, I feel my ideas have become more original"	

Dance: Of the 46 students who chose to comment on encouragement in freedom of expression in dance, most focused on the availability of curriculum opportunities and made distinctions between jazz, modern and national dance.

Most positive comments (22) regarding ways in which they had been encouraged to express their own ideas and feelings were related to modern dance where the students identified opportunities to:



- . choose their own music
- . do their own choreography
- . express their moods and feelings through their bodies
- . make up routines with groups and duets
- . be involved in presentations

The eight students who indicated that there was little freedom of expression felt that they were following dances made up by the teachers, that they were being forced to do things they couldn't do, or that it was too simple and they hadn't learned much.

Students' Suggestions for Change Related to the Arts Program

Suggestions about the audition process related primarily to ways in which appropriate students can be chosen. Some students would like to see harder auditions, a focus on background, a basic foundation in the arts, students' personality and attitude. Three students expressed concern that the one-day audition was not long enough for staff to watch every student.

Students' concerns and suggestions regarding the arts program related to three topics: their arts major, performances and general program.

Almost all students would like to have more time in their arts major. Some choice of their arts areas would be appreciated by a few students and some suggested that by grade 8 they be allowed to drop one arts subject. Conversely, a few students suggested that choice of a major should be postponed until grade 9 and that advanced classes in the arts be held after school.

Comments regarding performances focused on two issues, rehearsals and performance content. In regard to rehearsals, students are concerned about

- . simultaneous and frequent rehearsals which necessitate the students being forced to choose between them, thereby upsetting their teachers when they don't attend their rehearsals
- . rehearsals which require them to miss other classes
- . lack of notification of upcoming rehearsals causing conflict between prearranged activities

With respect to the content of performances, concern was expressed regarding the repetition of material. Students are of the opinion that the performances should

- . be varied to accommodate all the arts; students feel that music is emphasized rather heavily
- . encompass individual talent of students along with original material developed by students
- . allow for participation of more and different students

With respect to the Arts Program in general, students suggested that:

- . classes in the arts, particularly drama and dance, be made smaller
- . classes should be longer "so you can really get involved and get work done"
- . skills and technique be taught at varying levels

Almost all students are of the opinion that too much time is given to music and that there should be a more equal emphasis on all four arts.

Concern was expressed by some students regarding the value of National Dance and the extent to which it has any relationship to the other areas of dance.

The Academic Program

The students were asked to share their views on the academic program's contribution to their achievement, academic workload, the ways in which the academic program has allowed for the contribution of individual ideas and feelings, general satisfaction and recommendations for change.

Contribution to Achievement

Of the extensive and varied responses to this question, most comments were positive with the greatest number of comments related to the student's perception of the amount of learning that has taken place.

- I've learned a lot (13)
- This school has high standards so I work harder (6)
- I'm learning just as much as at my old school (6)
- The program here is much better than my old school (5)
- It's a challenge to fit everything into half a day (4)
- The work is basically the same if not harder (4)

Some comments related insightful perceptions into the subtle ways in which their achievement has been affected.

"It has contributed very much because I have a sense of responsibility for my academics and C.W.S.A. has taught me that rule"

"I have learned a lot in the academics and it is because of the discipline I have acquired that the challenging work is met mostly with enthusiasm"



"It is not the content of the program, it is the way they help me express my ideas that has improved my achievement"

Standardized Achievement Test Results

Each year since 1981, two subtest of the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, Vocabulary and Math Concepts have been administered to the students.

The Vocabulary subtest results indicated that an above average mean has been sustained over the three years although the overall mean for September, 1983 was somewhat lower than in previous years. A graphic representation of the students performance can be seen in Appendix H.

The students have also sustained an above average mean on the Math Concepts subtest. This mean has remained fairly consistent over the three year period. (Appendix I)

Workload

General satisfaction was expressed in the students' views on the comfort level with the work expected in the academics; over three-quarters of the students indicated a high degree of comfort.

Freedom of Expression in the Academics

Of the fifty-eight students, thirty-one expressed positive comments about freedom of expression in the academic areas, while three students expressed negative views. Students spoke of a lot of encouragement to share ideas and contribute to conversations along with a lot of projects and assignments which leave room for creativity.

"We have learned to incorporate our feelings in the arts into our academics"

"In almost every subject, we are to use our own creativity to an extent and we are encouraged to do so many times"

Nineteen students chose to make no comment. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that all students made comments in regard to freedom of expression in all arts areas.

Future Plans

The students at Claude Watson have been in a unique educational situation with the provision of both an arts and academic program. The extent to which the experience has influenced their future plans was explored along with their decisions regarding choice of program for secondary school.

While twelve students indicated that their experience at Claude Watson had not influenced their future plans, all other students reported impact either directly in regard to career aspirations or in regard to heightened awareness of opportunities.

Careers in the arts are now a desire for twelve students.

"Before I came to the school, I couldn't sing, now I feel I can sing very well and plan to go into ope.a. Claude Watson has greatly influenced my plans." (The reader maybe interested to know that this student has joined the Children's Opera Chorus and may realize her ambition).

"It has influenced me by showing how difficult the arts business is. Also to make me work extra hard in music so that my future as a musician is possible."

"It really hasn't affected me because I always wanted to do stage and act, but it has reinforced my love for drama and brought me closer to my goal."

"Before coming here, I really didn't know what I was going to be but now have taken visual arts as a major and found that I enjoy it."

Broadened outlooks on possible future plans were identified by eight students.

"I discovered new areas I may never have even thought of."

Other comments indicate the influence Claude Watson has had on their future.

- I'll surely consider arts as hobby (6)
- It helped me realize I can do anything I want (3)
- It made me more realistic (3)

Students were asked whether or not they planned to attend the Arts Program at Earl Haig Secondary School. The reasons for their decision along with their choice of major provided further information regarding their future plans.

Forty-four students indicated they were planning to attend Earl Haig, seven have decided against the arts program while eight were undecided at the time of the completion of the questionnaire.

Of those students that are proceeding to the Arts Program at Earl Haig an even distribution of choice of major was indicated: Music - 12, Drama - 11, Dance - 11 and Visual Arts - 11.

The eight undecided students have tentatively stated majors if they do attend. They are: Drama - 2, Dance - 2 and Visual Arts - 5.

When given an opportunity to relate reasons which contributed to their decisions, students proceeding to Earl Haig overwhelmingly saw the Arts Program at the secondary level as an opportunity to continue study in their arts major. Several students (9) indicated that they were going to try it for a year while other students cited friendships, interest in an arts career and parental influence.

"I wanted to excel even more in dance and I had heard it was a really great school."

"I would like to continue and see if there is potential to make a career out of it."

"I want to try it for a year and see if it has the kind of program I need."

"I love the people and the atmosphere of this school, the friends and the arts program."

"It's just the feeling I get when I play an instrument or sing that I don't get anywhere else".

Both those students that have chosen another secondary school or remain undecided shared similar comments regarding their contributing reasons. Several mentioned that they:

- . would not be pursuing a career in the arts so have decided to concentrate on the academics at a school with a "stronger" academic program.
- . are interested in trying something new and having an opportunity to pursue other interests.

Since Claude Watson - Spring Garden ends at Grade 8, those students who wish a setting other than Earl Haig would in most cases go to a grade 9 program in a junior high school. Some students view this situation as a real problem and referred to the issue as contributing to their decision to attend Earl Haig.

Students' Concerns and Suggestions for Change in the Academic Program

All groups of students focused on the need for enrichment and concern regarding the time constraint which does not allow them the opportunity to take subjects such as typing and family studies.

In conjunction with their concerns regarding enrichment, students also indicated that there were no exceptions made for "catching up" and that some students require longer academic periods to cover the content well. They feel that they have to work twice as hard as students in other schools to get all the work done.

With respect to general school policy, a longer lunch hour is requested by all the students with off campus privileges for grades 7 and 8.

THE STUDENTS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE - STAFF'S VIEW

The Screening Process

Many of the staff interviewed had not been involved in the audition process personally and therefore related their perceptions to their teaching experience. Some feel that not enough students are auditioning due to lack of advertising, concern by parents when their child travels by public transit, and reticence on the part of principals to "give up" their talented students.

Of those who have been involved they see the eight week audition as the most valuable for two reasons, students become more relaxed over the sessions and have to sustain a constant effort over the time period thereby resulting in a clearer view of the student's capabilities.

Individual suggestions for improvement to the screening process included:

- . an interview with the student
- . an interview with the home school
- . academic achievement as part of the criteria for admission
- . school staff involved in the audition process

The Program

Staff were asked whether or not Claude Watson had been successful in achieving the aim of a balanced arts and academic program.

All teachers see the school as being quite successful in providing both enriched arts opportunities and academics in a setting which gives students both something to look forward to and a needed release of energy. Although many teachers remarked on the workload and pressure associated with "trying to get everything done" in half a day, they felt that the key academic areas were covered. The program is both rigorous and demanding and requires students to do more in a shorter period of time. Concern for the student requiring remedial help or more time to accomplish requirements was shared by five teachers. The teachers commented that they personally do not have the time or the resources to help. A teacher for academic upgrading is seen by some teachers as a necessary component of the school. Enrichment for academically achieving students is provided in the teachers' view by enrichment in the arts.



While little formal integration takes place within and between academics and the arts, a few teachers commented on the subtle ways in which the arts relate to the academics and vice versa, i.e. literature, which is adapted to music, drama and dance. Increased communication among staff is seen as one means of establishing integration between subject areas.

Some teachers have a dual role involving responsibility for academics and an area of the arts. Their opinions were sought regarding their preference for a dual or sole responsibility. Those that liked the concept of teaching only one or the other expressed the opinion that they would be able to devote more time and energy to their position. Staff that liked a combination of arts and academic responsibilities indicated it afforded them an opportunity to get to know students in both settings and therefore they could develop a clearer understanding of students' capabilities.

Staff's Suggestions for Change

All staff had recommendations for improvement to the program which addressed their perception of the following needs:

- . more integration within the program
- . less repetition in performances
- . grouping students according to skill level for instruction in the arts

Over half the staff interviewed recommended changes related to the building's lack of space. They expressed the opinion that

- . studios are too small particularly for the classes of older students i.e larger bodies take up more space
- . more facilities are required, i.e. showers, space for rehearsal and mirrors in the gym

This concern was also shared by the caretaking staff and secretarial staff. Lack of space results in students carrying on projects in every corner resulting in increased clean-up and adds to the general business in the office.

THE STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE - PARENTS' VIEW

Of the 40 questionnaires returned by parents, all were exceedingly positive regarding the overall experience their children have had at Claude Watson, while offering constructive suggestions for improvement. Parents were asked to rate their agreement with statements concerning both the arts and academic program at the school. Further opportunity to share their perceptions was encouraged by asking parents what they would like to see continued or changed. Many availed themselves of this opportunity to express some heartfelt comments regarding the school.

The Screening Process

Most parents agreed or strongly agreed that the screening process for admission identifies those students who are appropriate for the school.

<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
14	18	3		5

Parents' Satisfaction with the Program

With respect to the parents' views of the academic program, 75% of those responding indicated that in their opinion their child has been well-prepared academically for secondary school. A similar number felt that the academic workload at the school is realistic for students.

Comments by parents in their own words clearly indicated their satisfaction.

"Claude Watson School is a marvellous school with an outstanding program."

"It has been an excellent and valuable experience. We appreciate the memory she will have for her entire life."

"I think Claude Watson will always be beneficial to children with good aptitude in the arts. It helps them develop their talents which might lay hidden."

"Thanks for a unique educational experience."



Again, satisfaction with the arts program was indicated by 75% of the responding parents. The following table indicates the extent to which parents agree that specific arts programs are enhancing and developing their children's talents.

The Program Enhances & Development of Child's Talent (N=41)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
Music	20	17	-	-	3
Visual Arts	17	20	1	-	2
Dance	17	16	3	-	2
Drama	14	17	4	-	5

When parents were asked what they would like to see continued or expanded, eight comments related to the continuation of "good program", while the remaining remarks focused on the following components of the arts program.

- field trips including outings to performances (7)
- Reflections (year-end performance by students) (4)
- guest appearances by experts in their field (3)
- extra curricular activities including team sports (3)

Secondary School Choice

Parents were asked whether or not their child was planning on attending the Arts Program at Earl Haig Secondary School and the reasons contributing to this decision. The following table shows their decisions at the time of returning the questionnaire. Thirty two indicated that their child would be attending Earl Haig, four have decided against the Arts Program while four remain undecided.

Of those that indicated a continuation in the arts program, most remarked that it was a natural progression since their child has benefitted from the program and are interested in pursuing both academic and arts courses.

Included in the twenty-six "yes" were four who qualified their response by saying it may be for only one year; not wanting to go to a junior high school, and fear of the unknown by their children were the reasons given by these parents.

The group indicating "maybe" and "no", shared similar concerns. Their comments centered on concern with the caliber of the academic program and career aspirations by their children which do not include the arts.

Parents' Suggestions for Change

While fifteen parents chose to make no comment regarding changes, five expressed their satisfaction by saying they would like to "leave it to the professionals". Of the remaining 21 parents, their comments were divided between the arts & academic programs and general school organization.

In the arts area, thirteen comments related a desire for:

- . new material in performances
- . more drama productions and participation by more students
- . opportunities for individual students to display talents
- . less time on music

Academically, parents' remarks related a need for assistance to academically weak students, and more emphasis on academics.

School organization accounted for nineteen comments by parents with fifteen addressing a need for smaller classes and four expressing a concern with the rules of the school they consider to be too rigid.

FOCUS ON THE STAFF

THE STAFF'S VIEW

Profile of Staff

All staff see themselves as good at what they do, hard working, and with high expectations both for themselves, each other and the students. The teachers view of themselves as hardworking is supported by the average absences per teacher when compared with the average teacher in North York

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Average No. of Days Absent/Teacher</u>	
		Claude Watson	North York Elementary Teachers
1981-82	12	2.6	9.5
1982-83	12	3.3	9.9

Teachers have a wealth of experience ranging from seven to thirty one years in the school system. While most have had experience in both the elementary and junior high panels, many have also been involved in the arts either through additional responsibilities in their former positions or through personal interests in the arts.

All Professional Arts staff have had experience working with children. Some have performed professionally in their field, while many are involved in private instruction outside the school.

When asked their reasons for applying to teach at Claude Watson, many teachers (8) stated they wanted a change, a new experience or a different teaching environment.

"I was enthusiastic about the challenge and hard work."

"I was looking for an exceptionally fine program."

"I wanted to do special things."



Several (4) also indicated the expected opportunity for involvement in their arts interests through teaching. Support and belief for the concept of the school were also cited as reasons for their application.

"The philosophy of education at Claude Watson is the same as mine."

"I could understand the artistic and talented."

"I wanted to gain experience from others."

"The school meets needs not met anywhere else."

One teacher had been involved with the development of the concept of the school and another had taken a year off to go back to school to become qualified to apply.

Professional arts staff also indicated interest in the concept of the school as their reason for application. An opportunity to realize teaching income from their talent was cited by several arts staff.

The teachers' reasons for wanting to teach at Claude Watson also related to their expectations which centered around a teaching experience where people would be interested in the arts:

- . students and staff would be creative
- . the teaching experience would be different
- . kids would benefit from a good program

Some expectations were not fulfilled. Three teachers and most professional arts staff stated that the students were not as talented as they expected, perhaps due to the school's policy of accepting students who will benefit from an enriched program in all four arts areas, and/or lack of appropriate students' auditioning. Others expected:

- . more time for academic enrichment
- . more work but not quite as much
- . opportunities to become involved in the arts program indirectly

Expectations were not a concern for four teachers who observed that they didn't know what to expect, therefore, were neither disappointed nor surprised.

The Teaching Experience

Opportunities for communication between staff are few owing to the "break-neck pace", workload and timetable scheduling. Almost all staff cite the need for increased communication which would result in overcoming some of their concerns. Teachers indicated a lack of communication as a contributing factor in:

- . lack of planning ahead for rehearsals, etc. resulting in students being withdrawn from their classes
- . consideration for the value of all the teachers, but particularly academics only teachers
- . lack of integration of subject matter even within the same arts discipline
- . competition between staff members

Most staff relate this lack of communication as stated previously to time constraints, but most also indicate that a significant contributing factor is the inflexibility of the timetable, with staff members:

- . lunching alone or with different colleagues each day
- . having little individual planning time
- . having few opportunities to communicate with other staff members regarding general program planning.

While the staff views this lack of communication as a prime concern, they see their suggestions as ways of making the school better, both for themselves and the students.

Communication between the staff and parents is generally very good as indicated by both teachers and professional arts staff.

Parents were described as

- interested and interesting (7)
- hard working and supportive (4)
- very involved (3)

A few teachers expressed the viewpoint that the parents' interest resulted in more demands for them personally. The secretarial staff who have contact with teaching staff, students and parents see the work environment at Claude Watson as demanding. Rehearsals, many phone calls for messages and information, as well as additional duties associated with the screening process keep the staff constantly busy. Students are seen as polite, interesting and friendly with the younger students somewhat dependent on the secretaries for information on the "whats, wheres and whens" of their timetable. Parents are supportive and friendly.

Due to the constant activity in the office throughout the day, the secretarial staff would like to see staggered work hours, (in late - out late) which would provide them with quiet time in which to accomplish their work.

THE STUDENTS' VIEW OF STAFF

Although the students were not encouraged to comment directly on the teachers and teaching methods, the general overall satisfaction with the academic program and the positive affective experience for students infers satisfaction with staff.

During the interviews and on the questionnaires students repeatedly commented on the quality of the teaching at Claude Watson. Teachers were described as friendly, helpful, caring and involved with the individual students. They encourage their students to express their own ideas and feelings as well as give their best effort in all areas. Varied teaching methods along with opportunities to "go ahead" are seen as characteristic of their teaching methods.



PARENTS' VIEW OF STAFF

Just as the parents were generally pleased with the educational experience provided at Claude Watson, so were they equally as impressed with the staff.

(N = 58)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
The teachers at Claude Watson take a personal interest in my child.	14	19	1	-	6
The Claude Watson School assists students in developing good character and self-respect.	22	16	1	-	1
My child's development and achievement in his/her programs is communicated to me satisfactorily.	17	17	5	1	-

As can be seen from the above results 85 - 95% of the 41 parents who returned the questionnaire, either strongly agreed or agreed with these statements related to staff.

However, most enlightening were the comments by parents regarding the impact the staff has had on their children and their school experience.

"C.W.S.A. has been the best experience I could wish for my son - enthusiasm and dedication of teachers and principal and other staff have instilled a very positive attitude in him for which we are grateful."

"The teachers and principal are excellent. They take an interest in my child's welfare."

"We have been very pleased with the progress in both the academic and arts programs at C.W.S.A. We give credit to the Principal and his dedicated staff and thank them for a job well-done."



ADMINISTRATORS' VIEW

Both the principal and artistic director were open and candid in their views regarding the school's achievements since its inception in September 1981.

While they have many positive comments with respect to what has been accomplished, constructive criticism and acknowledgement of needs were also prevalent. Their opinions and perceptions in regard to concerns and suggestions were similar to those shared by staff, students and parents.

"We are getting better" was the general consensus with the eight-week audition seen as far superior to the one-day audition. The characteristics of discipline and consistent motivation are not always discernible in one day. An increase in the number of "appropriate" students at auditions would assist in making good choices.

More opportunities for teachers from other schools to visit Claude Watson and performances for the community as a whole was suggested as a means of getting the right students.

Both administrators recognize the difficulties in communication as elaborated on by the staff and inferred by the students. A busy school schedule and timetabling difficulties leaves little, if any time, to develop staff communication. The office is seen as having more contact with individual staff members than between staff themselves. There is a concern by administrators that calling more meetings in order to aid communication would put more stress on an already hectic schedule. The artistic director shares the concerns regarding space and views this problem as contributing to difficulties with time-tabling.

The teachers are seen as hardworking, who endeavour to meet the demands of their unique situation. In their view, a dual teaching role, both academics and arts, is the best; however, it has become increasingly more difficult to find staff. The administrators feel that both the children and the parents respect the teachers more when carrying a dual role, as the teachers are responsible for both parts of the curriculum and see the students in a variety of situations.

Students at Claude Watson are seen as fairly open, confident and verbal, who accept feedback whether positive or negative. They are generally willing to try new ideas and require very little teacher time with regard to discipline.



While there is some concern with respect to the experiences the students are not getting, i.e. family studies, science labs and industrial arts, the general feeling is that in the core areas of language arts and mathematics, students are receiving a program which is at least as good or perhaps better than they would have in a regular setting.

Emphasis on consolidation and refinement within the basic structure is seen as the mandate rather than large changes.

The following issues are seen as priorities for change within the school:

- . an arrangement which would provide levels of instruction in the arts
- . more opportunities for drama
- . a timetable which facilitates better use of space
- . improvement in communication
- . more contact with the outside arts world through visits from performers

RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The opportunity to write a researcher's perspective was exciting since many of my hours this year have gone into the initial study at Claude Watson. I have chosen to focus on the experiences which affected me both personally and as an educator.

Not only did I enjoy the task itself, I also was impressed with the warmth and maturity of students, the professionalism of the teachers and the general "good feeling" when I walked in the door, which seemed to say to me that there was a definite sense of purpose at this school for all concerned, including myself.

In working with the grade 8 students I was surprised by their ability to communicate their feelings and perceptions so eloquently. Concepts which I never expected a thirteen year old to have, let alone express, were shared easily, both orally and in written form. When students did have suggestions and they did, those suggestions were given constructively and often followed by explanations which illustrated their knowledge of the complexity of the actual operation of a school. Their sense of comradeship and genuine caring for each other and the group as a whole must be considered unique.

I don't believe the students came to Claude Watson exhibiting these characteristics. Certainly the kind of student that might be interested in a school of this type initially says something about their personality; however, I am of the opinion that the school and all that that means somehow provides a climate which enhances that which is best in all of us.

Not only do the students seem special, so do the teachers. These professionals are willing to give up lunch hours and spares. They come in early, leave late and in addition genuinely care about their students.

Lest you go off thinking everything is magical at Claude Watson I should say that there are concerns, (some significant), by all groups, but I wouldn't expect anything less from a group that really cares about the continuation of a concept such as this. Hopefully this study will act as a catalyst to make an already unique educational experience even better!

APPENDIX

Claude Watson School for the Arts

Spring Garden Campus

GRADE 8 STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why did you decide to audition for the Claude Watson School for the Arts?

2. In your opinion, are the auditions for admission to the Claude Watson School for the Arts satisfactory?

Very
Satisfactory

5

☐

4

☐

3

☐

2

☐Not at all
Satisfactory

1

☐

Comments:

3. What (if anything) have you had to give up by coming to Claude Watson?

4. In what ways have you changed since coming to Claude Watson?

5. How successful has the Claude Watson School been in helping you develop the technical skill of your particular talents?

	Very Successful				Not at all Successful
	5	4	3	2	1
Drama	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. In what ways have you been encouraged to express your own ideas and feelings at Claude Watson in the following areas?

Drama

Music

Visual Arts

Dance _____

Academics _____

7. To what extent do you feel comfortable with the amount of work expected of you at this school? (in the following areas)

	Very Comfortable				Not at all Comfortable
	5	4	3	2	1
Drama	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academics	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

8. In your opinion how well has the academic program at Claude Watson contributed to your academic achievement?

9. In what ways has attending Claude Watson influenced your plans for the future?

10. In what ways has your attendance at Claude Watson affected your friendships with others?

11. What involvement have you had in outside school activities related to the arts, e.g. lessons, sports, groups, etc.?

Before coming to Claude Watson

After coming to Claude Watson

12. What awards, certificates or other achievements have you received before and after coming to Claude Watson? Please be specific.

Before

After

13. During your years at Claude Watson, what have been the highlights for you?

14. If you were involved in making changes at Claude Watson, what would be your recommendations?

15. a) Do you plan to attend the Arts Program at Earl Haig Secondary School?

☐ Yes Arts Major at Earl Haig _____

☐ No

b) What were your reasons for making either decision?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

Name _____

Longitudinal Study of
Claude Watson School for the Arts

Student Interview

1. In general, did you get/are you getting what you expected? Please explain.
2. What did/do you like best about the
 - 1) arts program?
 - 2) academic program?
3. What did/do you like least about the
 - 1) arts program?
 - 2) academic program?
4. Do you think that the successful students at Claude Watson have particular characteristics? If so, what are these characteristics?
5. This past year you have had some teachers that teach only academics or only arts, and some that taught both. Which do you prefer and why?
6. If you were involved in making changes at Claude Watson, what would be your recommendations?

Claude Watson School for the Arts

Spring Garden Campus

Staff Interview

Why did you apply to teach at Claude Watson School for the Arts?

Does teaching at Claude Watson meet your expectations? Please elaborate.

In what ways has your experience at Claude Watson been unique?

How successful is the screening process at identifying appropriate students for admission to Claude Watson?

Do you have any recommendations?

How successful is the school at implementing the concept of providing an enriched arts and academic program?

If you were involved in making changes at Claude Watson what would be your recommendations?

In reflecting on these questions, please consider the following areas:

- . Organization of the school
- . Curriculum
- . Leadership
- . Staff Morale
- . Communications (Students, Parents, Staff)
- . Professional Development
- . School Climate

Claude Watson School for the Arts

Spring Garden Campus

INTERVIEWS

Shortly after an interview, a person may remember an important item which was not mentioned. If such occurs, please write your comment below and return it to Educational Research and Evaluation Services.
5050 Yonge Street, Willowdale, Ontario.

Comments

Thank you.

Claude Watson School for the Arts

Spring Garden Campus

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete and return in the self-addressed stamped envelope to Educational Research and Evaluation Services.

	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly</u> <u>Disagree</u>	<u>No</u> <u>Opinion</u>
1. The Claude Watson School for the Arts is providing my child with a good overall education.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. The Claude Watson School provides a proper balance between the academic program and the arts program.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The screening process for admission identifies those students who are appropriate for the school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. The amount of work expected of my child in the arts is realistic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. The following arts programs are enhancing and developing my child's talents.					
Drama	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visual Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. The academic workload at the school is realistic for the students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I feel my child has been well prepared academically for secondary school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. The teachers at Claude Watson take a personal interest in my child.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. The Claude Watson School assists students in developing good character and self-respect.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. My child's development and achievement in his/her programs is communicated to me satisfactorily.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. What changes (if any) have you noticed in your child's behaviour or attitude toward school or education since attending Claude Watson?

12. In what ways has your child's attendance at Claude Watson affected his/her friendships?

13. Some of the things that are presently being done at the Claude Watson School for the Arts I would like to see continued or expanded are:

14. Some of the concepts and practices at the Claude Watson School for the Arts that I would like to see changed are:

15. In what ways has the Claude Watson Arts Program affected your child's future career aspirations?

16. a) Is your daughter/son planning on attending the Arts Program at Earl Haig Secondary School?

Yes ☐

No ☐

- b) What were the reasons contributing to this decision?

Additional Comments

Thank you for your co-operation.

Claude Watson School for the Arts

Spring Garden Campus

PARENT INTERVIEW (Telephone)

Parents:

This is _____, a Consultant in the Educational Research and Evaluation Service of the Board of Education for the City of North York. As part of the evaluation of the Claude Watson School for the Arts we are interviewing those parents of students who have either been withdrawn or were demitted from the Claude Watson School.

Would you be willing to answer a few short questions?

Why did your child leave the Claude Watson School for the Arts?

In your opinion was the appropriate choice made originally to enrol your child in Claude Watson?

How do you think the present placement of your child suits his/her needs?

Thank you for your courtesy and time.

PERCEPTIONS OF FORMER PARENTS

Over the past three years, some students have either been withdrawn or were demitted from the program. The parents of students that could be contacted by phone were asked their reasons for withdrawing their child, their views on the appropriateness of their child's attendance at the school and their satisfaction with their child's present placement.

In all, twenty parents were contacted and of this number eight had been demitted by the school and six had been identified as gifted.

Those students that had been identified as gifted went on to a program for gifted students. The remaining students' parents identified either a difficulty keeping up with the academic program or a conflict in the talent area.

Academically some of these students needed extra help or fell behind in class work. Parents indicated that there was no time for their children to catch up after class.

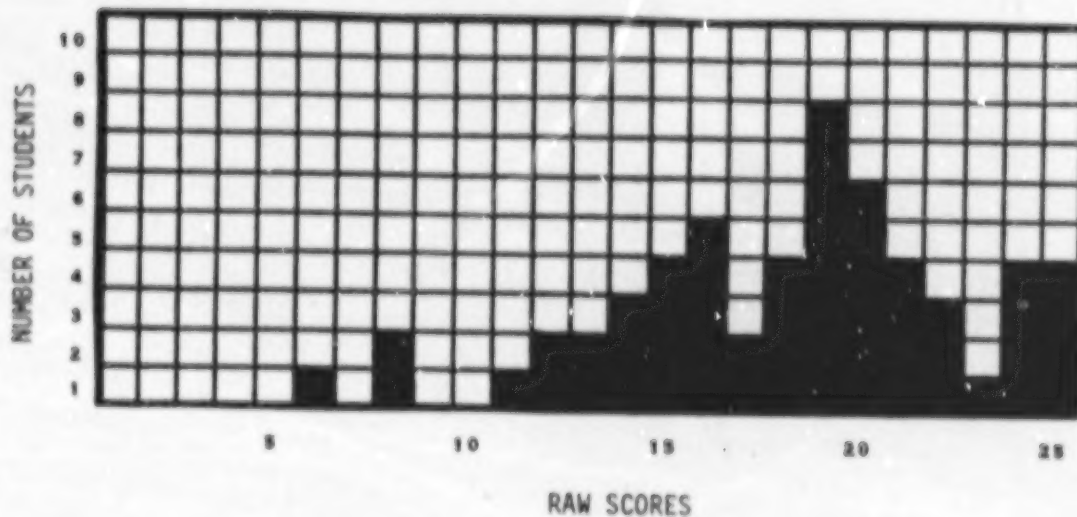
When talent was identified as a reason for withdrawal, some parents indicated their child had been talented in only one area and therefore found it difficult to participate in other areas, while others indicated their children were not appropriate for the development of serious talent. Various other comments related to difficulty with peer adjustment and transportation difficulties due to distance from home.

Twelve parents felt that the appropriate choice had been made to send their child to Claude Watson as it afforded their child a good opportunity to become involved in arts experiences. Six parents did not feel that the choice had been appropriate as cited in their previous comments regarding reasons for their child's withdrawal.

Of the twenty parents spoken with, seventeen were of the opinion that the present placement suits their child very well indicating their child is receiving the appropriate academic program and interacting positively with their friends in the neighborhood and now have time for extra curricular activities.

SELF CONCEPT SCORES OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS

1983-84

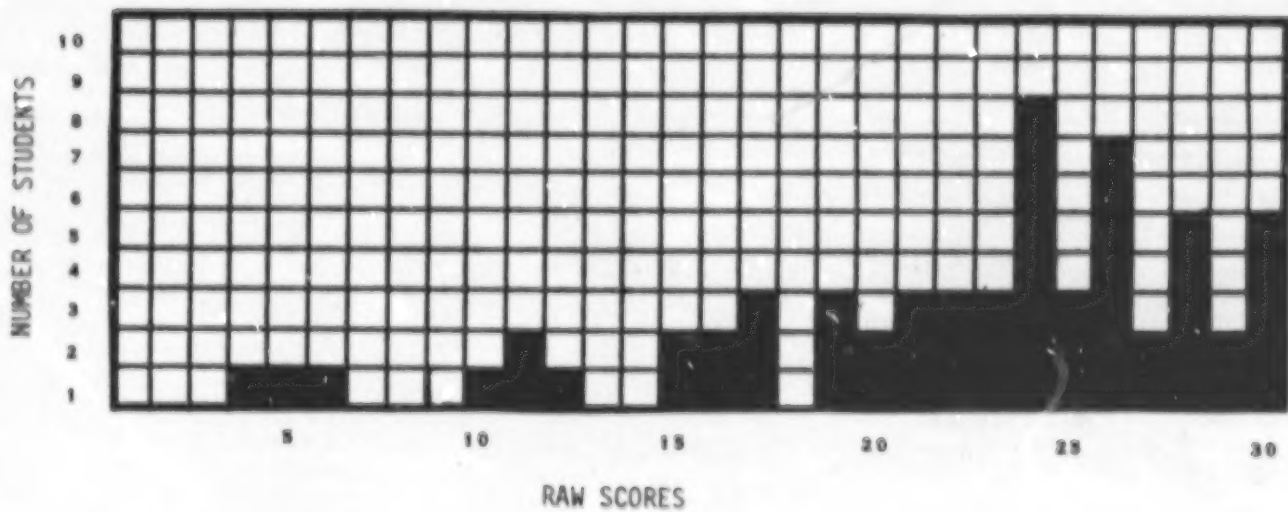


Class Mean - 18.1

Expected Mean - 16.6

N=59

1981-82



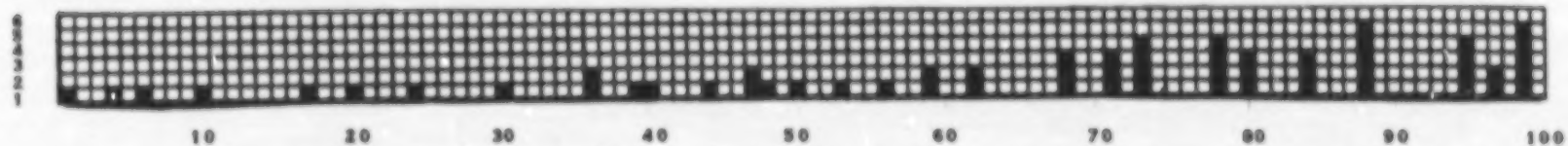
Class Mean - 21.9

Expected Mean 19.0

N=60

CANADIAN TEST OF BASIC SKILLS - VOCABULARY

September, 1983

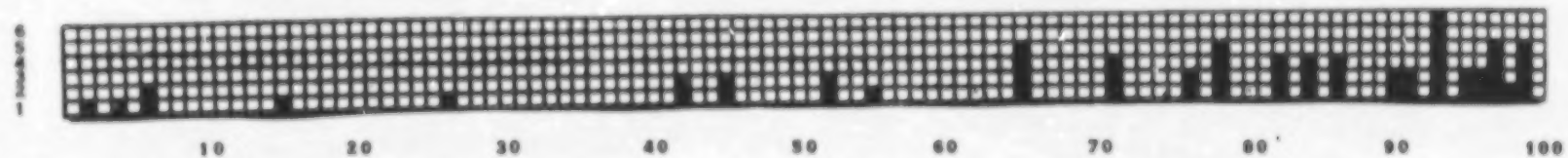


Class Mean - 68%ile

Expected Mean - 50%ile

N=60

November, 1982

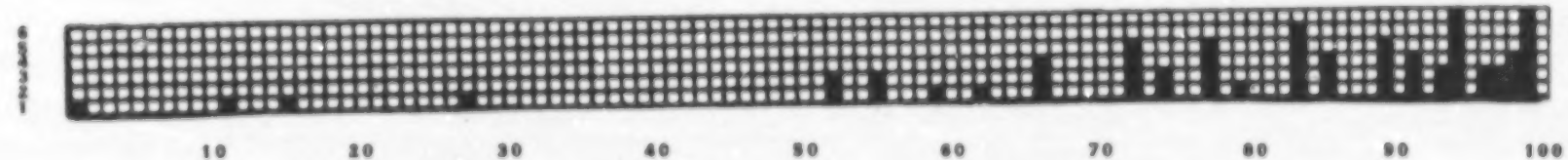


Class Mean - 82%ile

Expected Mean - 50%ile

N=58

October, 1981



Class Mean - 83%ile

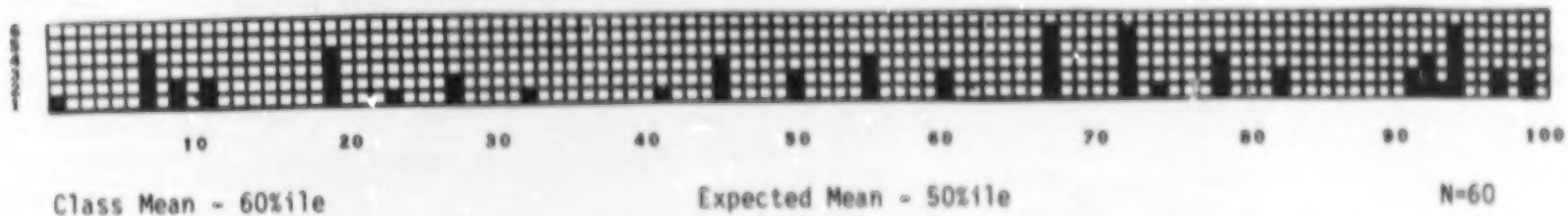
Expected Mean - 50%ile

N=60

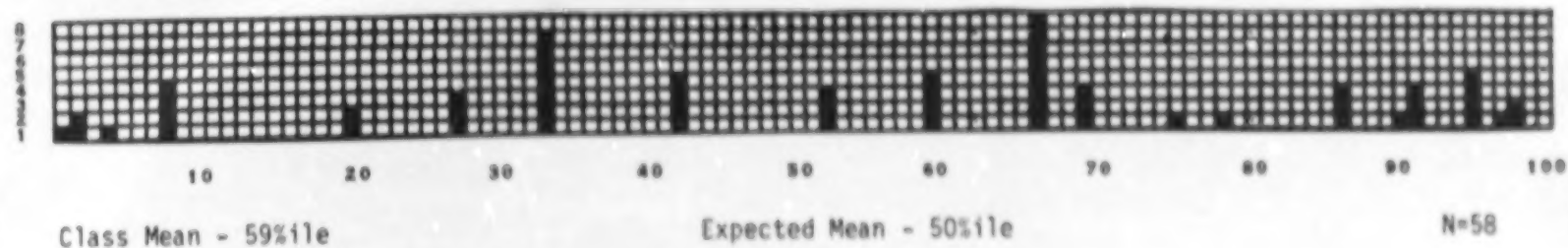
APPENDIX H

CANADIAN TEST OF BASIC SKILLS - MATH CONCEPTS

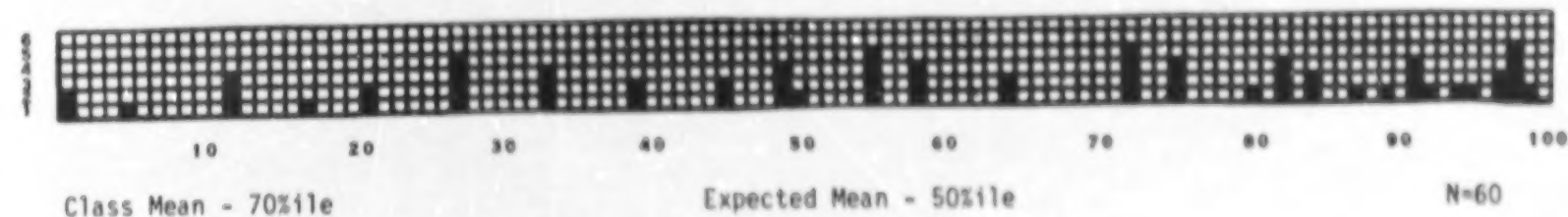
September, 1983



November, 1982



October, 1981



NUMBER OF STUDENTS

APPENDIX I